



TOM CILMI
Suffolk County Legislator
10th District

For Immediate Release

Date: February 4, 2016

Contact: Maria Barbara
(631) 854-0940 (office)
(516) 457-2573 (cell)
maria.barbara@suffolkcountyny.gov

Legislators call for Legislative oversight of County Health Department fees

Suffolk County Legislator Tom Cilmi (R-East Islip) announced today that he has introduced legislation to require the Department of Health, like other county agencies, to obtain legislative approval before raising fees, and to require a public hearing before doing so. Legislator Cilmi's bill, the first for his 2016 agenda, comes after the DOH raised existing fees and fines in the sanitary code, and even created some new ones, without legislative approval. It continues his efforts to reign in a system that treats taxpayer dollars like free money.

"Government cannot treat our taxpayers like an ATM. When it comes to fee increases, the public deserves a voice which is why nearly every other fee in Suffolk County is subject to Legislative approval," Legislator Cilmi said.

Cilmi compared the DOH's freedom to raise fees to "giving your teenager your credit card and a ride to the mall," he said. "It's all good until you get the bill."

Suffolk's Sanitary Code currently authorizes DOH to unilaterally raise fees and fines. Recently, the department announced numerous fee and fine increases, many of which went up by 10% but some by as much as 50%. According to the Legislative Office of Budget Review, the increases will raise close to \$1 million annually at a time when the County is facing a deficit of close to \$200 million. Legislator Cilmi's bill would require a public hearing for such increases as well as approval from the eighteen member County Legislature.

Legislator William Lindsay III (D-Holbrook), a co-sponsor of the bill said, "All Suffolk County Departments should be held to similar standards when it comes to increases in fees, penalties, and fines. Our role as Legislators is to help effectuate positive change that does not impose unbearable fees and fines that inhibit business creation and economic development. Therefore, I think it is very important for our departments to present these increases in a fair and transparent manner where the impact can be analyzed and discussed openly."

Cilmi agreed, "Some of these fines and fees may be justified," he said, "but that should be for the Legislature to decide with the benefit of public input."

#